

Valmiki

The story of the author of the epic, "Ramayana"

Vol. 579 Rs. 20

Amar Chitra Katha: the Glorious Heritage of India



Valmiki

To Valmiki, we Indians owe a deeper debt of gratitude than to any other poet. He gave us the Ramayana, one of the most fascinating stories of all time. No words can describe the hold the Ramayana has had on the people of India from ancient times to the present day. It has affected the life and thought of our people and played an important role in shaping Indian culture. Valmiki was the Adikavi, the first poet, and his Ramayana the Adikavya, the first poem. While remembering the man's work, we must not forget the man. How he wrote the Ramayana, and under what conditions, is itself an absorbing story. This version is based on Valmiki Ramayana and Vallathol's Malayalam translation.

SAYINGS OF VALMIKI

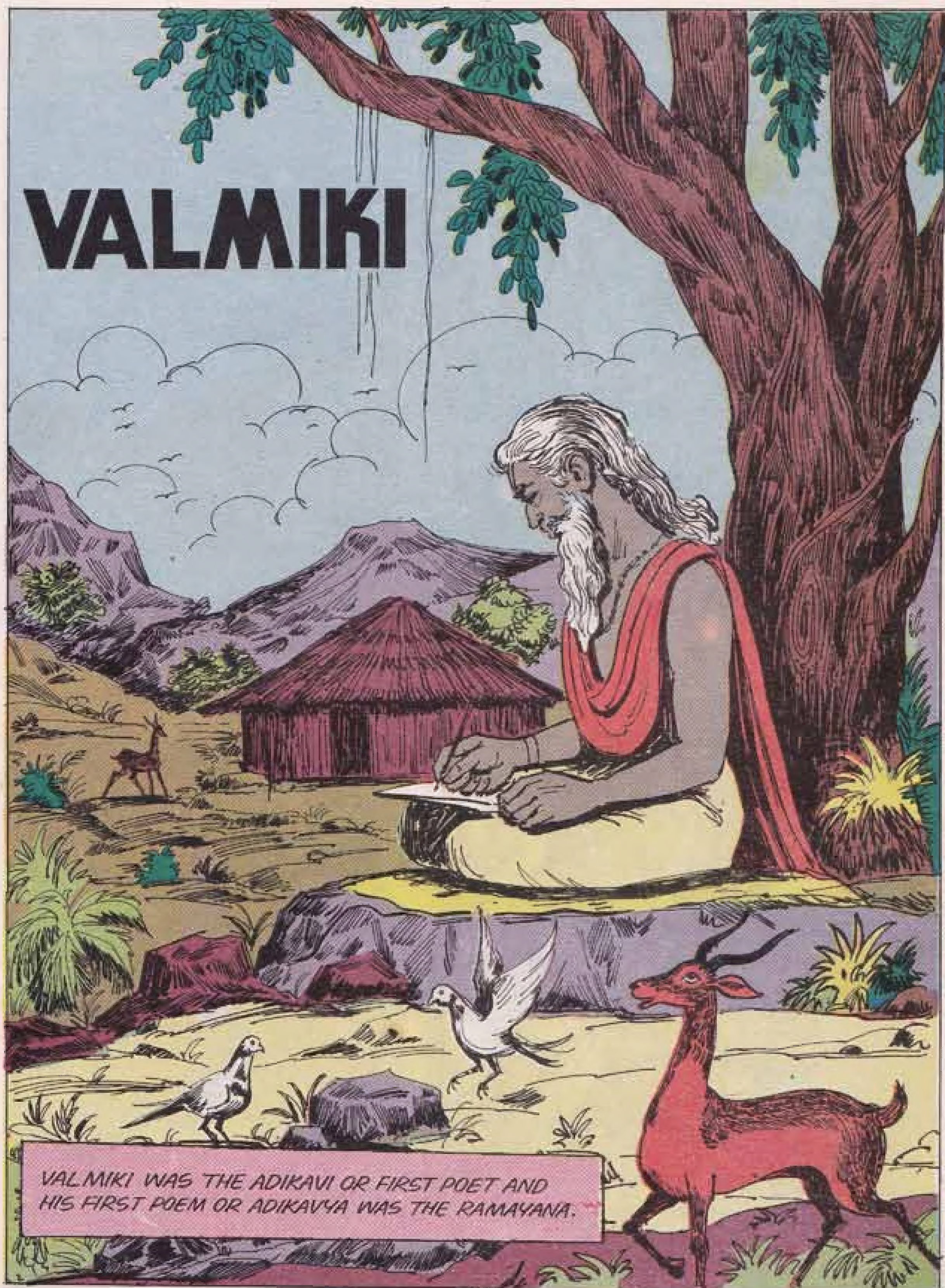
- The mind is the cause for the direction of all senses leading to good and evil acts.
- Honour the wives of others and protect them, O Ravana, as you will your own. Set an example by loving your own wife.
- Kindness is a supreme virtue.
- Great men when they undertake to do a great deed, are never upset.
- They are the blessed,who by their wisdom, can control their anger, even as water subdues a conflagration.
- Whoever does anything with enthusiasm rarely fails to achieve his object.

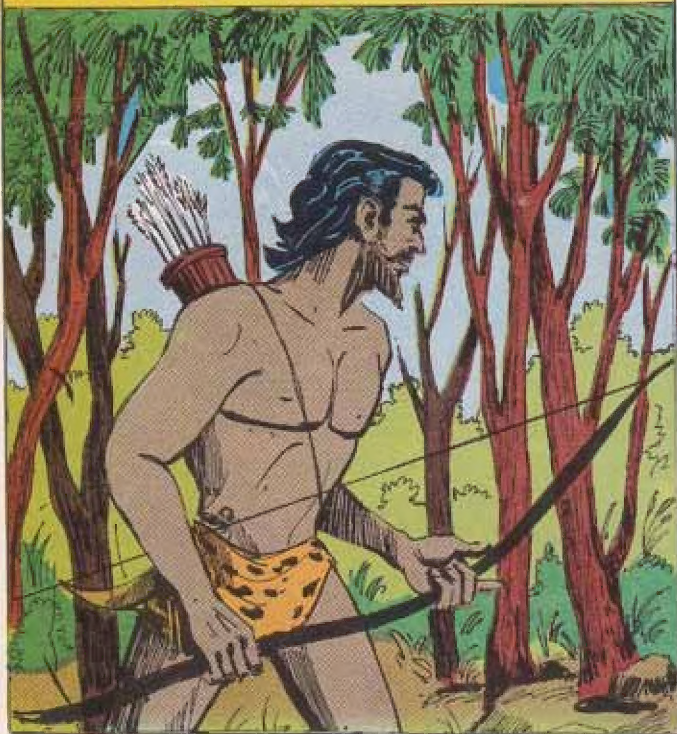
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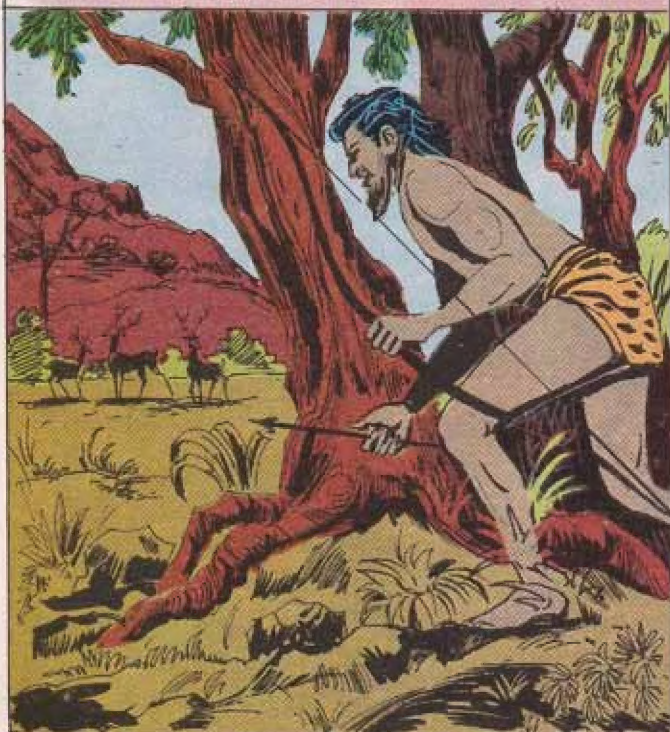
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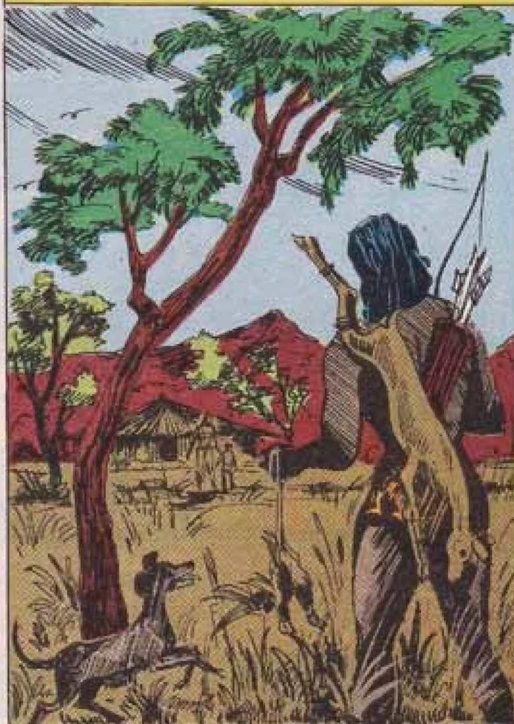
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VALMIKI
VALMIKI WAS THE ADIKAVI OR FIRST POET AND HIS FIRST POEM OR ADIKAVYA WAS THE RAMAYANA.


STRANGELY, VALMIKI WAS A HUNTER AND ROBBER IN HIS EARLY LIFE.


ROAMING THE JUNGLE HE SHOT DOWN HARMLESS BIRDS.


HE KILLED GENTLE ANIMALS...


...AND BROUGHT THE CARCASSES HOME FOR FOOD.

HE ALSO WAYLAID AND ROBBED LONE TRAVELLERS IN THE JUNGLE.





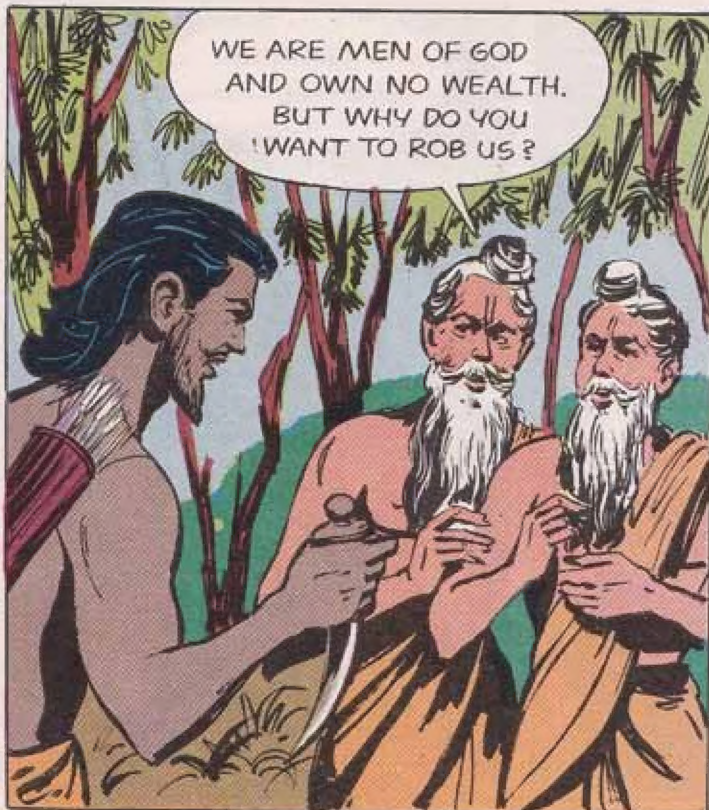





THUS HE LIVED A LIFE OF VIOLENCE AND CRIME. ONE DAY HE SAW FROM A DISTANCE THE SAPTARISHIS OR SEVEN GREAT SAGES.


STOP, IF YOU LOVE YOUR LIVES!

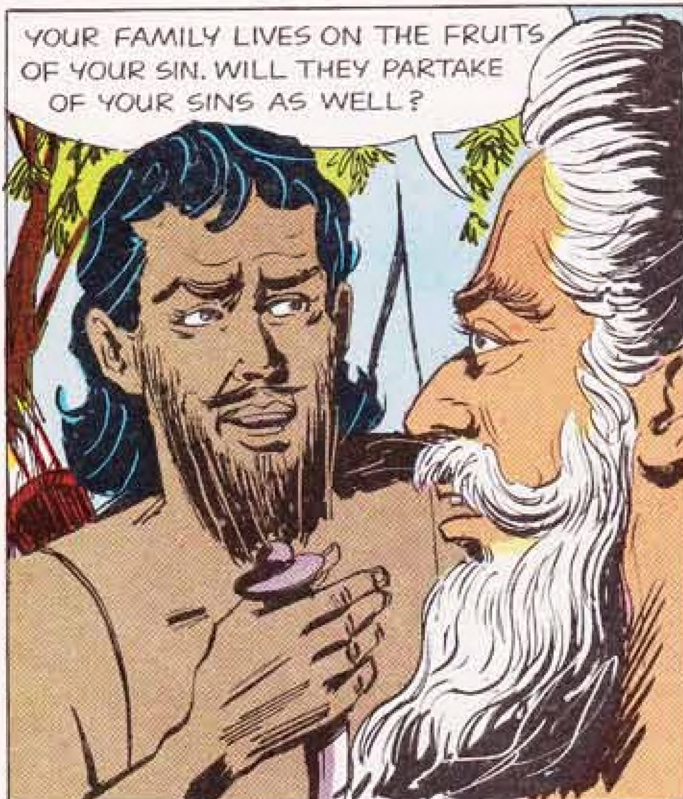

WHAT DO YOU WANT?
ALL THE WEALTH THAT YOU HAVE ON YOU.





BUT FIRST WILL YOU ANSWER MY QUESTION?

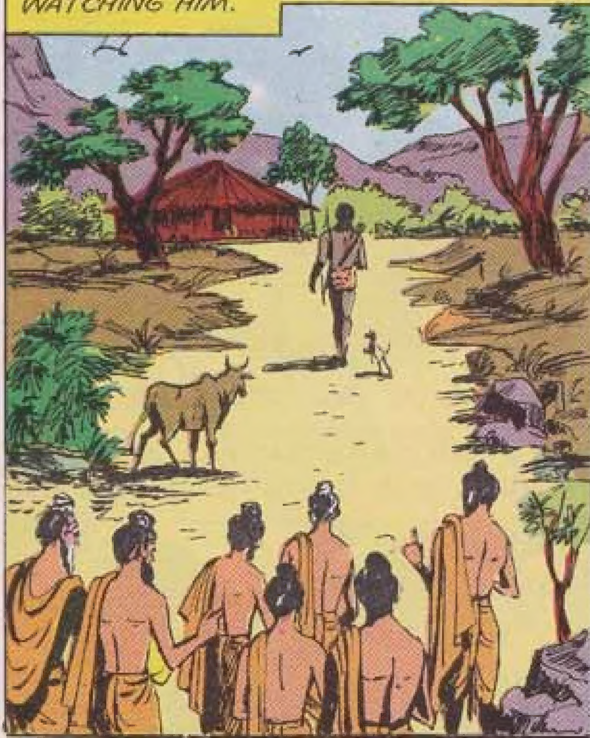
OUT WITH IT! AND BE QUICK.





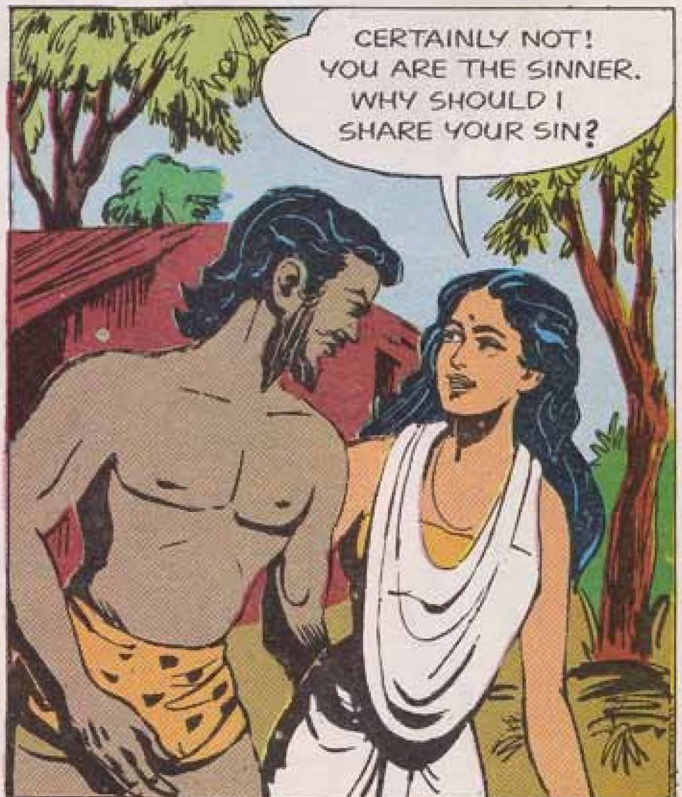
GO AND ASK THEM. COME BACK WITH THEIR ANSWER.

ALL RIGHT. BUT IF YOU RUN AWAY, I WILL MAKE YOU PAY FOR IT.


THE ROBBER WALKED TOWARDS HIS HUT WHILE THE RISHIS STOOD WATCHING HIM.


INSIDE THE HUT_
DEAR WIFE, YOU BENEFIT FROM MY SINFUL LIFE. DON'T YOU?
OF COURSE, I DO. WHAT OF THAT?


YOU WILL SHARE MY SINS; WON'T YOU?

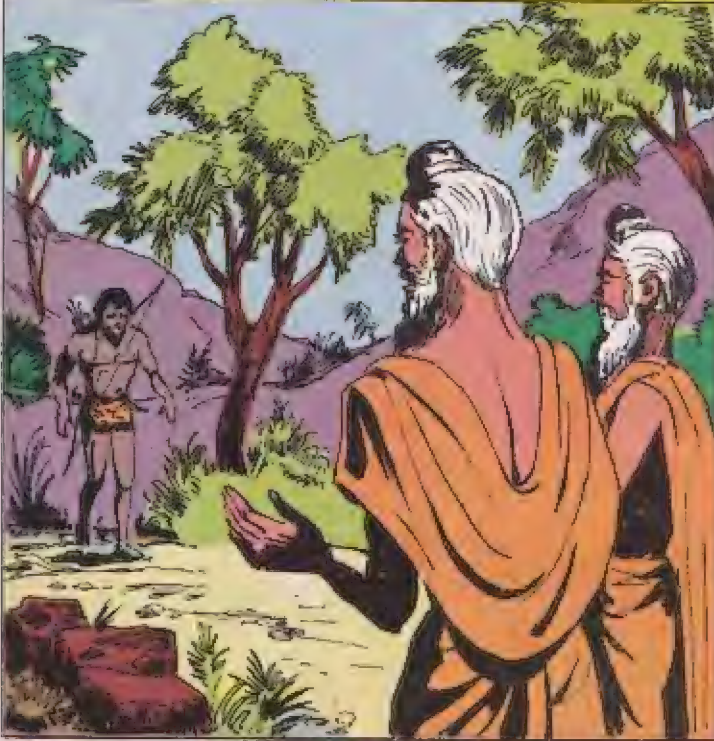

CERTAINLY NOT! YOU ARE THE SINNER. WHY SHOULD I SHARE YOUR SIN?


THE ROBBER TURNED HOPEFULLY TO HIS SON.
WON'T YOU AT LEAST SHARE MY SIN, MY DARLING?
NO FATHER, I WILL NOT.


THE ROBBER COULD NOT BELIEVE HIS EARS. HE STOOD STUNNED AND DAZED.
OH, MY GOD!


BENDING UNDER THE WEIGHT OF SORROW, HE WENT OUT WITH FALTERING STEPS.


LOOK, THERE HE COMES.





THE ROBBER TOLD THEM, AND THEN THREW HIMSELF AT THEIR FEET WEEPING BITTERLY.

MY SOUL IS LOST. REDEEM IT, O COMPASSIONATE ONES.


THE RISHIS TOOK PITY ON HIM.
SIT DOWN AND RECITE 'MA-RA'. PUT YOUR HEART AND SOUL INTO IT. DON'T STOP FOR A MOMENT TILL WE RETURN. GOD BLESS YOU.


THEREUPON THE ROBBER SQUATTED ON THE GROUND, CLOSED HIS EYES, AND FORGETTING HIMSELF BEGAN RECITING 'MA-RA' WHICH ACTUALLY WAS 'RAMA' INVERTED.




MONTHS PASSED INTO YEARS, AND STILL HE SAT UNMOVING. AROUND HIM AN ANTHILL WAS FORMING ITSELF. TIME ROLLED ON AND THE ANTHILL COVERED HIM COMPLETELY.


AT LAST ONE DAY THE SEVEN RISHIS RETURNED TO THE PLACE.


NOW COME OUT INTO THE OPEN.
THE ANTHILL BURST OPEN AND OUT STEPPED A PERSON DIFFERENT IN EVERY RESPECT.


TO LORD RAMA THE MIRACLE IS DUE, AND TO YOU, O GREAT RISHIS.
AMONG THE GREATEST RISHIS YOU ARE ONE, O VALMIKI. AND GREATER GLORY AWAITS YOU.
HE CAME OUT OF "VALMIK" MEANING ANTHILL. AND SO THE RISHIS CALLED HIM BY THE NEW NAME, OF "VALMIKI."

THEREAFTER VALMIKI BECAUSE OF HIS SPIRITUAL POWER AND KNOWLEDGE EARNED THE RESPECT OF HOLY MEN EVERYWHERE.

LONG AFTERWARDS MAHA RISHI NARADA PAID HIM A VISIT.

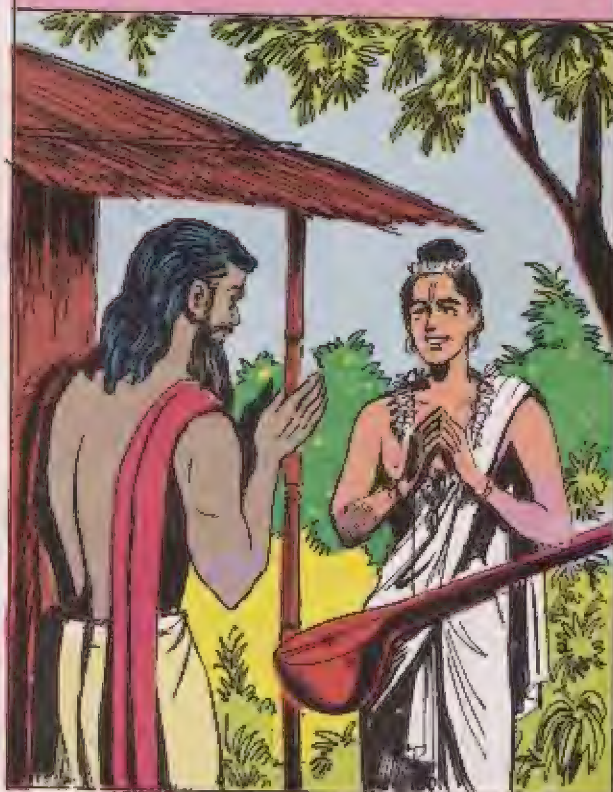





THEY ENGAGED THEMSELVES IN CON-VERSATION.
WHO AMONG MEN, IS THE MOST PERFECT ONE, O NARADA?
RAMA WHO IS THE PRESENT KING OF AYODHYA.


LET ME TELL YOU THE WONDERFUL STORY OF RAMA.
PLEASE BEGIN. I AM IMPATIENT TO HEAR IT.


SO NARADA NARRATED RAMA'S STORY.
I HAVE TOLD YOU ALL I KNOW.
WHAT A FASCINATING STORY. I AM GRATEFUL TO YOU, O NARADA.


NARADA TOOK LEAVE OF VALMIKI.

EVER AFTER, THE STORY REMAINED FRESH IN VALMIKI'S MIND, JUST AS HE HAD HEARD IT.

ALL THE TIME I CAN THINK OF NOTHING ELSE. STRANGE INDEED.

HE CALLED ONE OF HIS PUPILS.

I AM GOING TO THE TAMASA RIVER FOR A BATH. COME WITH ME.

LEAD MASTER. I FOLLOW.

AFTER THEY HAD COVERED SOME DISTANCE...

LOOK, NATURE HAS DECKED HERSELF IN ALL HER FINERY.

ON THE BRANCH OF A TREE SAT TWO BIRDS, HUSBAND AND WIFE, BILLING AND COOING.

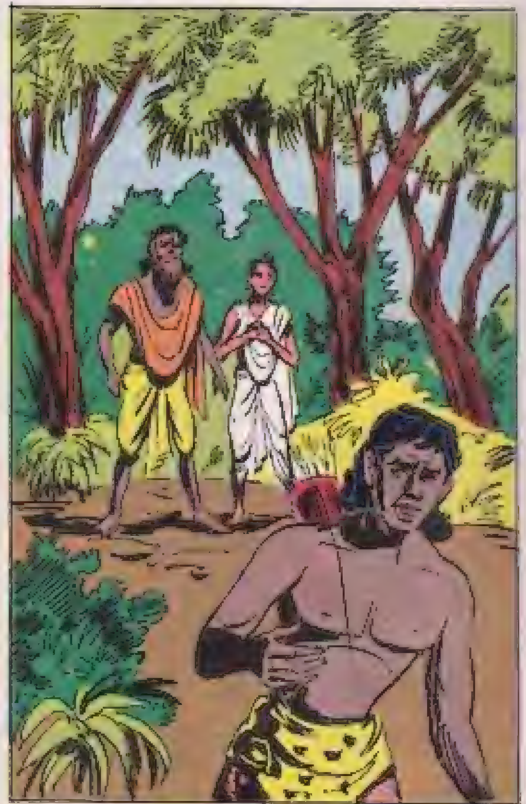




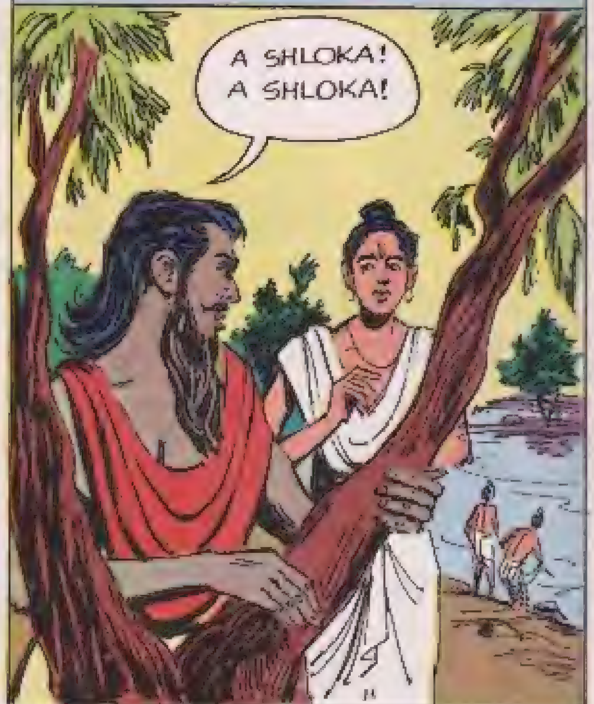





IN HIS GRIEF VALMIKI CURSED THE HUNTER.
YOU HAVE SLAIN A HARMLESS CREATURE. MAY YOU NEVER PROSPER, O CRUEL MAN.




VALMIKI'S UTTERANCE WHICH WAS IN SANSKRIT, CAME OUT IN VERSE WITH MELODY AND RHYTHM.
THE WORDS! THE FORM! SOMETHING QUITE NEW! AMAZING INDEED!


THUS CAME INTO BEING THE FIRST STANZA EVER. AS IT AROSE FROM HIS "SHOKA" OR GRIEF HE CALLED IT "SHLOKA"
A SHLOKA! A SHLOKA!


THAT DAY HE HAD A VISITOR – BRAHMA THE CREATOR HIMSELF.
BLESSED INDEED ARE YOU, O VALMIKI.
LORD, I AM OVERWHELMED.


WHAT MAY YOUR PURPOSE BE, LORD?
EVERYTHING HAS HAPPENED AS DECREED BY ME.

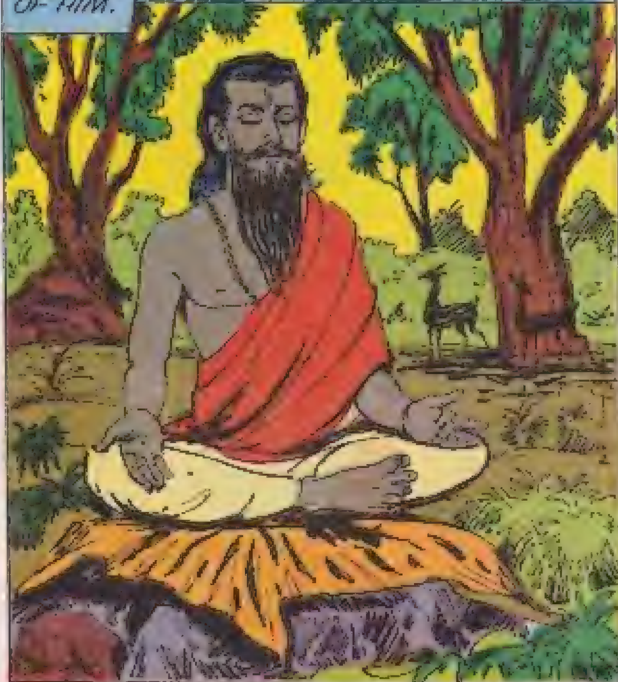

YOU HAVE HEARD RAMA'S STORY FROM NARADA. WRITE WHAT YOU KNOW AND ALSO WHAT IS UNKNOWN TO YOU.

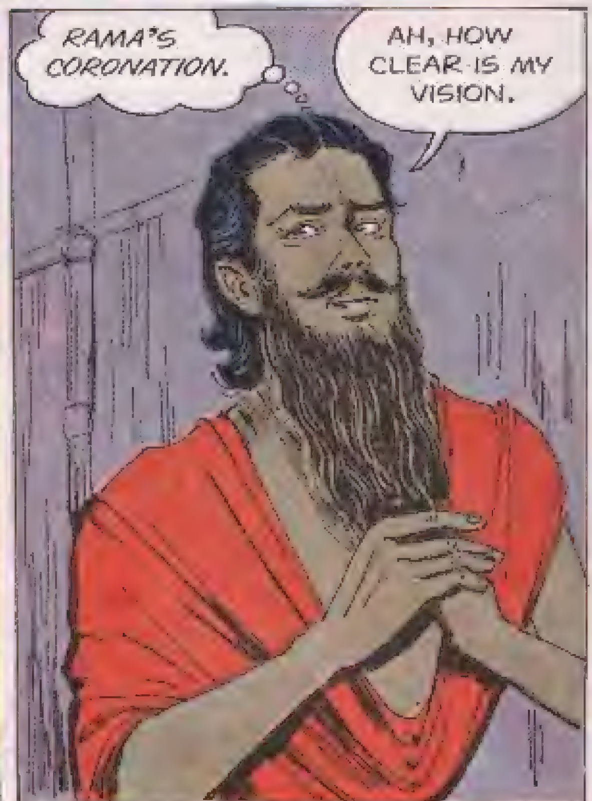

BUT LORD, HOW CAN I WRITE ABOUT THINGS I DON'T KNOW?

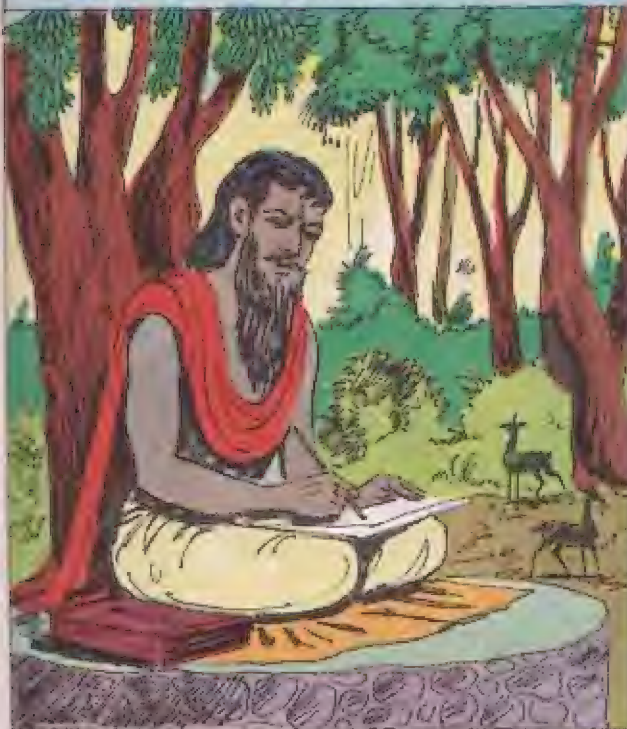
WHATEVER KNOWLEDGE YOU DO NOT POSSESS SHALL BE REVEALED TO YOU. AS LONG AS MOUNTAINS AND SEAS EXIST ON EARTH, SO LONG WILL YOUR RAMAYANA LIVE.

SO BE IT, LORD.

VALMIKI SAT IN YOGIC MEDITATION. HE SAW EVERY INCIDENT IN THE RAMAYANA AS IF IT WERE HAPPENING JUST IN FRONT OF HIM.







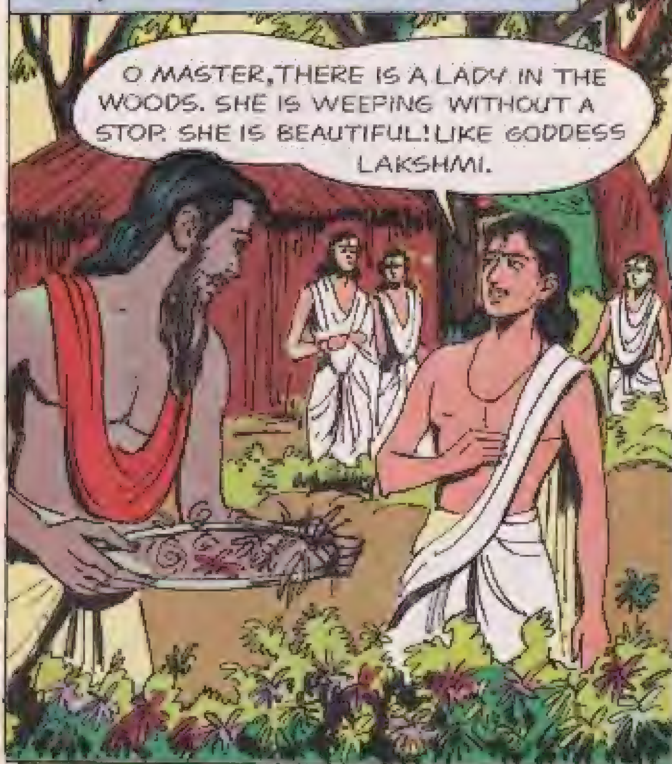


THE SHLOKAS HELD THE LISTENERS SPELL-BOUND.

YEARS LATER, SOME DISCIPLES WENT DEEP INTO THE WOODS. THERE THEY FOUND A WOMAN LYING ON THE GROUND AND CRYING AS IF HER HEART WOULD BREAK.

WHO IS SHE AND WHY IS SHE CRYING?

WHAT A BEAUTIFUL LADY. IS SHE A GODDESS?






THE RISHI HURRIED TO THE PLACE WHERE SITA LAY.
O SITA, CHASTEST AMONG WOMEN, DO NOT GRIEVE. I AM HERE TO HELP YOU.


SITA WHO HAD BEEN ABANDONED IN THE FOREST BY RAMA FOUND A BENEFACTOR IN VALMIKI.
O JEWEL OF WOMANHOOD, COME WITH ME TO MY HERMITAGE. CONSIDER IT YOUR OWN HOME.



VALMIKI ENTRUSTED SITA TO THE CARE OF FEMALE ASCETICS IN THE HERMITAGE.



IN DUE COURSE SITA WAS BLESSED WITH TWINS.

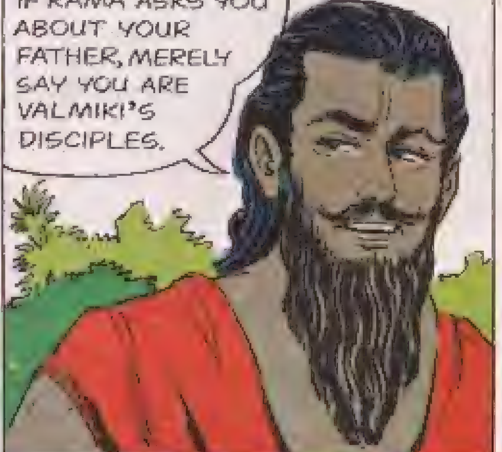


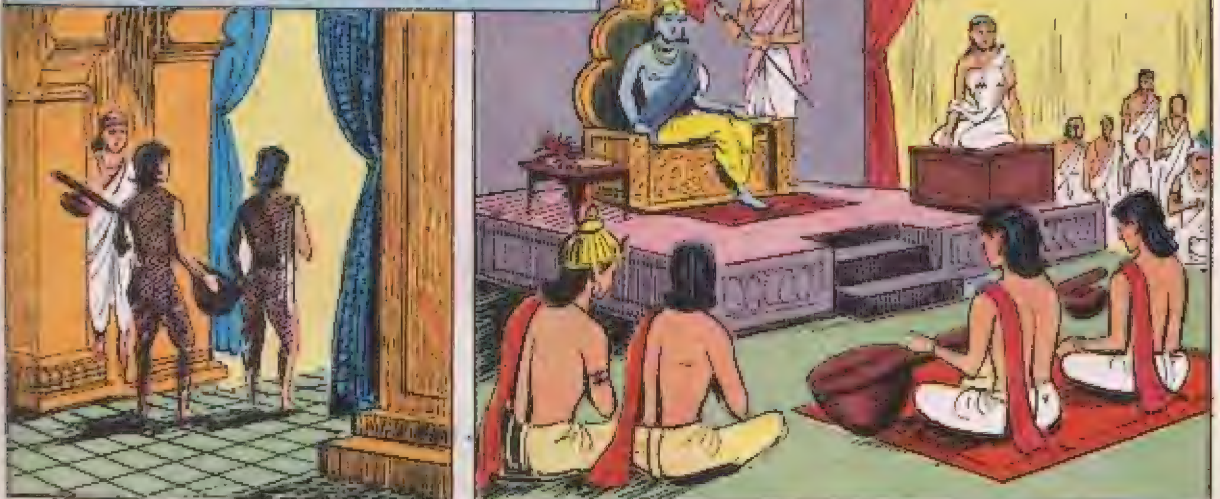
THE BOYS, LUV AND KUSH WERE BROUGHT UP BY VALMIKI AND EDUCATED BY HIM.




AMONG THE MANY THINGS HE TAUGHT THEM WAS TO RECITE THE RAMAYANA TO THE ACCOMPANIMENT OF THE VEENA.
BEAUTIFUL!

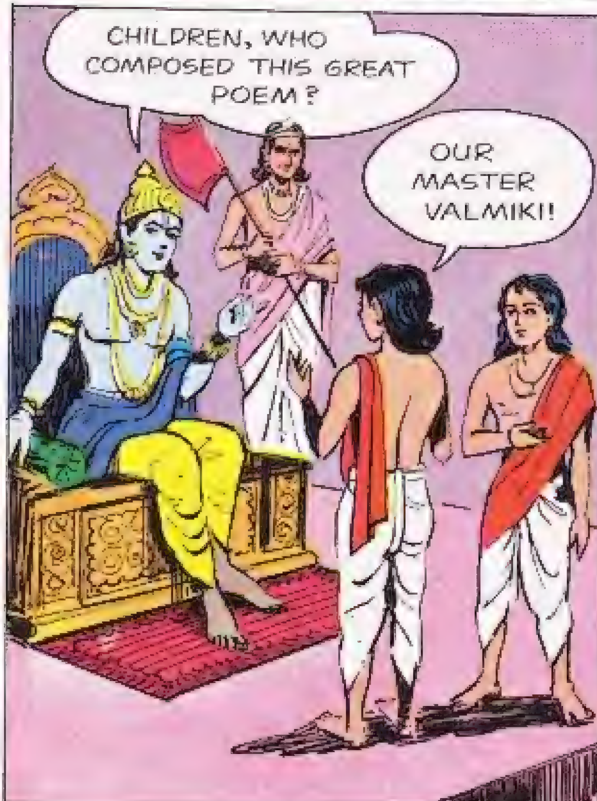

ONE DAY NEWS CAME THAT RAMA WAS PERFORMING THE ASHWAMEDHA OR HORSE-SACRIFICE.
MEET RAMA AND SING THE RAMAYANA BEFORE HIM.


IF RAMA ASKS YOU ABOUT YOUR FATHER, MERELY SAY YOU ARE VALMIKI'S DISCIPLES.


LUV AND KUSH WENT TO NAIMISHA, THE VENUE OF THE SACRIFICE.

RAMA AND THE ASSEMBLY WERE ENTRANCED BY THE SINGING OF THE BOYS.

WONDERFUL POETRY AND MUSIC.






RAMA GAVE AN ORDER TO HIS MINISTER.
I AM MIGHTILY PLEASED WITH THE PERFORMANCE OF THESE BOYS. GIVE THEM EIGHTEEN THOUSAND GOLD COINS.


WE DO NOT ACCEPT MONEY. WE ARE GOING.


LATER THE TRUTH DAWNED ON RAMA.
THE BOYS ARE MY OWN SONS! SITA IS THEIR MOTHER. I WILL SEND FOR SITA.


MEET VALMIKI AND GIVE HIM THIS MESSAGE.

THE MESSENGER MET VALMIKI AT HIS HERMITAGE.

WHAT? A MESSAGE FROM RAMA?

YES, YOUR HOLINESS!






...IF YOU WILL SWEAR BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY THAT YOU ARE BLAMELESS.

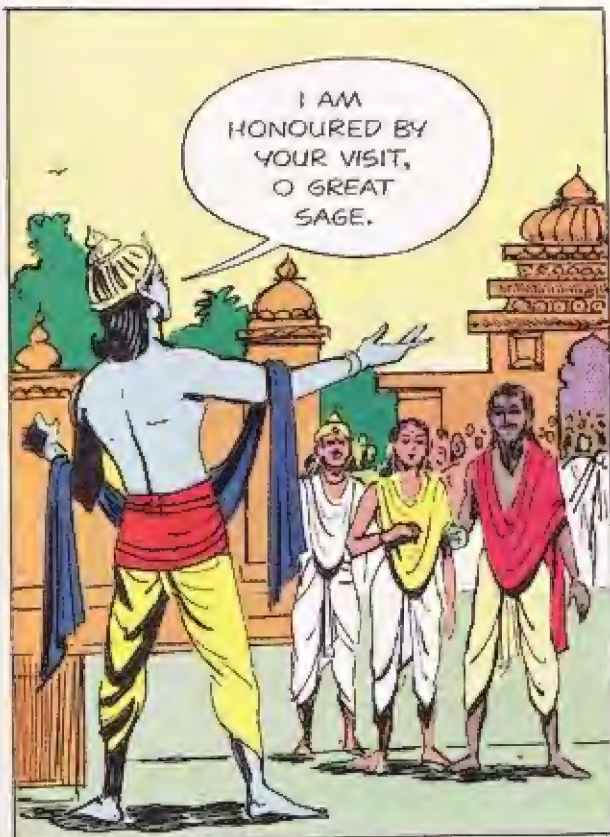

BUT I AM BLAMELESS.


YOUR OATH IS MERELY TO AFFIRM YOUR PURITY IN PUBLIC. WILL YOU GO WITH ME?


I WILL DO ANYTHING MY HUSBAND COMMANDS. COME, LET US GO.

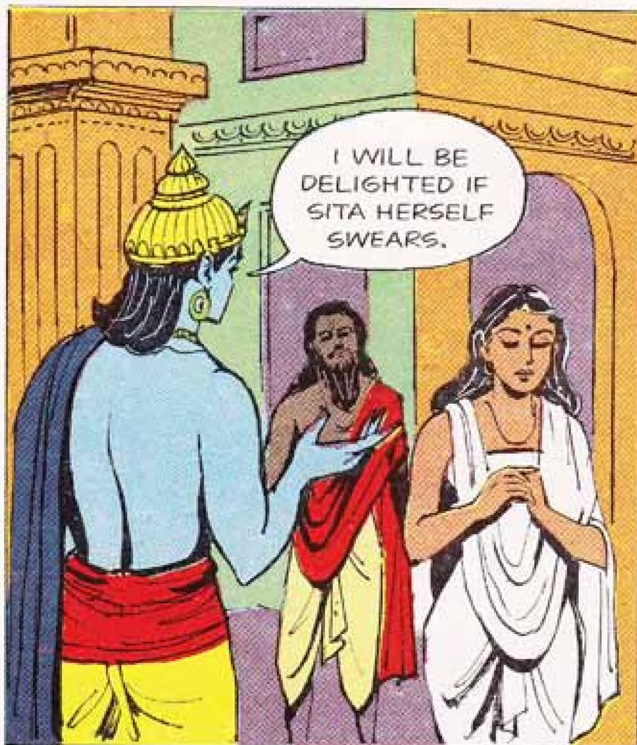
THE INMATES OF THE HERMITAGE BADE SITA A TEARFUL FAREWELL.

THEY ARRIVED AT THE VENUE OF RAMA'S ASHWAMEDHA SACRIFICE.





O RAMA, I TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY ON BEHALF OF SITA. I DO SOLEMNLY SWEAR THAT SHE IS PURE IN MIND AND BODY.





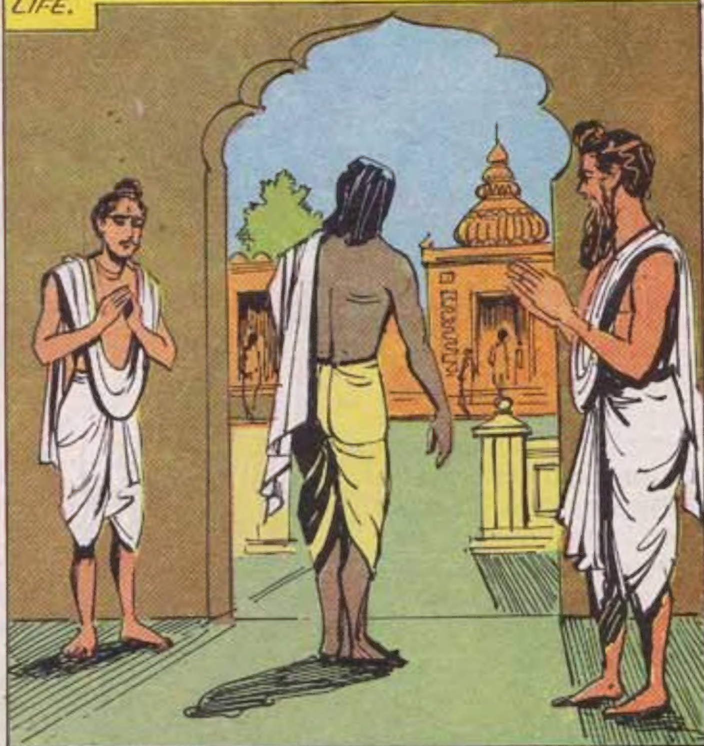
AND THEN A MIRACLE TOOK PLACE. THE EARTH OPENED BY ITSELF AND UP CAME BHOOMI DEVI SITTING ON HER THRONE.

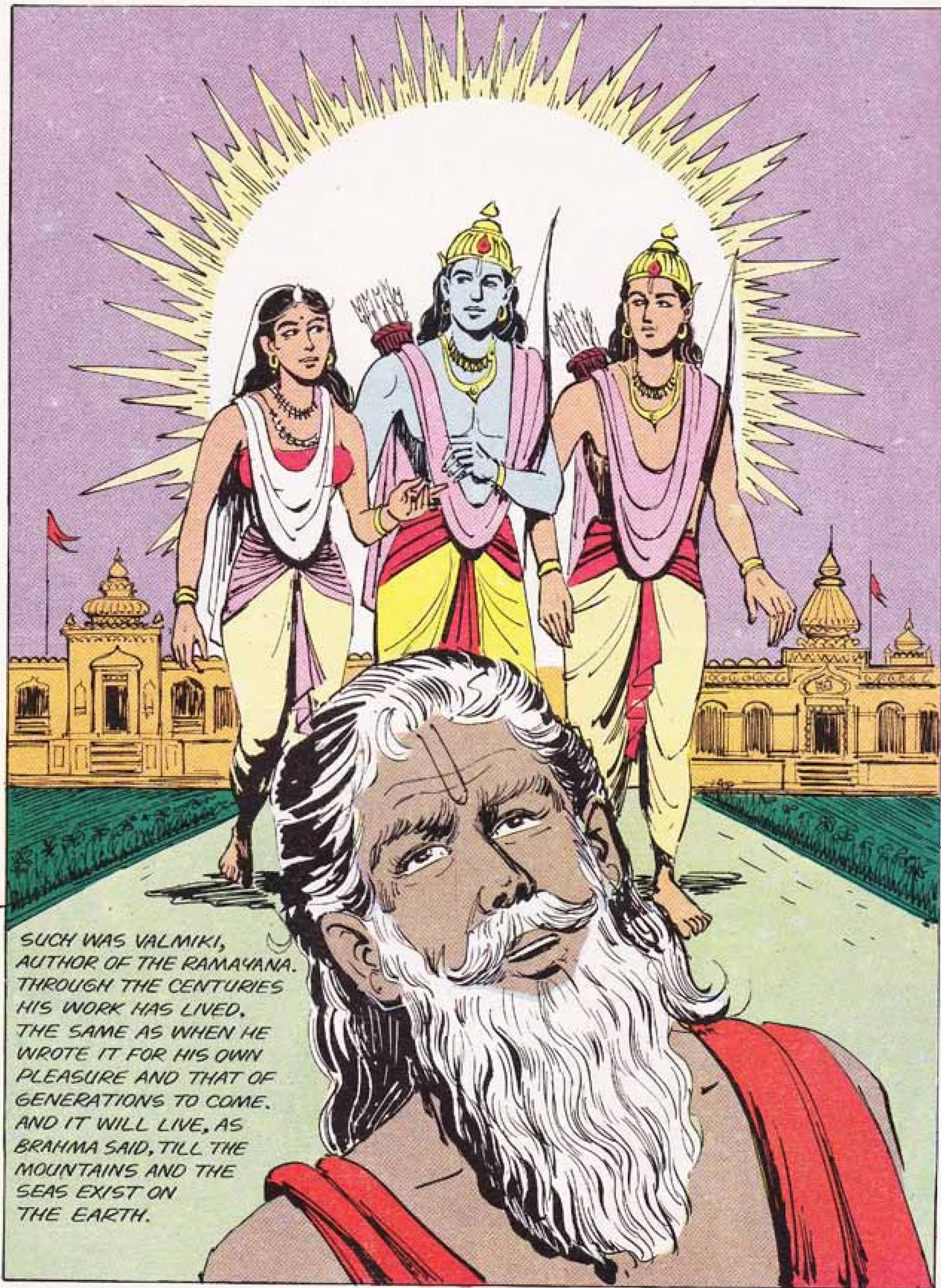
SITA, MY DEAR DAUGHTER, I HAVE COME TO TAKE YOU.

THE GODDESS OF EARTH LIFTED SITA TO THE THRONE AND DISAPPEARED DOWN THE OPENING WITH HER.

SITA! MY SITA!

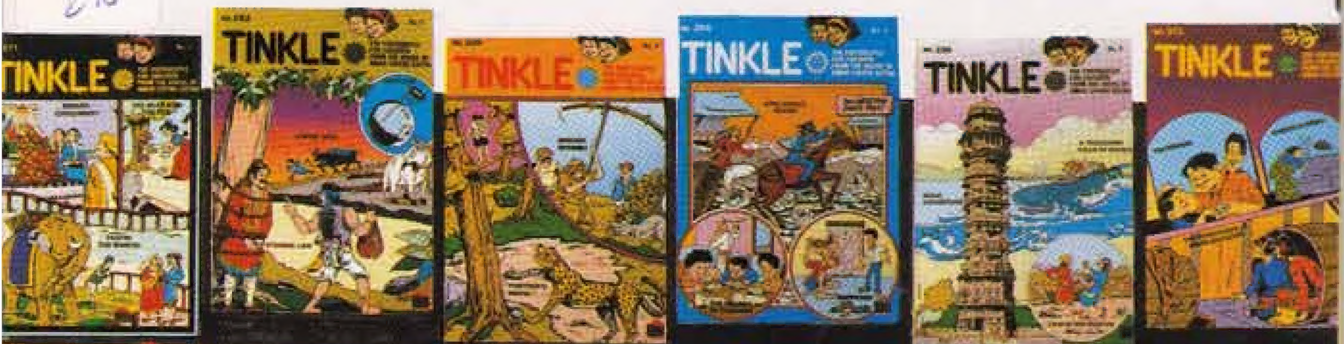
AND VALMIKI LEFT THE SCENE OF THE SACRIFICE FOR HIS HERMITAGE TO CONTINUE HIS ASCETIC LIFE.




SUCH WAS VALMIKI, AUTHOR OF THE RAMAYANA. THROUGH THE CENTURIES HIS WORK HAS LIVED, THE SAME AS WHEN HE WROTE IT FOR HIS OWN PLEASURE AND THAT OF GENERATIONS TO COME. AND IT WILL LIVE, AS BRAHMA SAID, TILL THE MOUNTAINS AND THE SEAS EXIST ON THE EARTH.

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